

Message Text

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FOR AGRICULTURE

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SUBJ: FOOD SITUATION IN GOLGA REGION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. EMBASSY TRAVEL TO KAZAN, ULYANIVSK AND UFA DURING PERIOD MARCH 21-26 PROVIDED FURTHER CONFIRMATION THAT SOVIETS CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE DISLOCATIONS IN SUPPLYING TO POPULACE ITEMS WHICH BASIC TO DAILY DIET. AMONG ITEMS IN SHORTEST SUPPLY ARE BEEF, MUTTON, BUTTER, POTATOES AND CABBAGE. AUTHORITIES CLEARLY HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO AVOID PANIC BUYING AND HOARDING AND TO ENCOURAGE POPULACE TO ALTER THEIR DIETARY PATTERNS. LOCAL POPULATION APPEARED TO BE ACCEPTING PRESENT SITUATION IN STRIDE. END USMMARY.

2. FIVE DAY TRIP TO KAZAN, ULYANOVSK AND UFA GABE EMBOFFS FURTHER OPPORTUNITY TO MEASURE DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY SOVIETS EXPERIENCING IN FOOD SUPPLY AREA FOLLOWING LAST YEAR'S POOR HAEVEST. OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING AVAILABILITY OF PRINCIPAL COMMODITIES IN THESE CITIES AS FOLLOWS:

A. KAZAN: BREAD APPEARED AVAILABLE IN NORMAL QUANTITIES ALTHOUGH HIGH QUALITY WHITE BREAD NOT SEEN. ALL BREAD STORES HAD SIGNS LIMITING PURCHASES OF BREAD BY INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO TWO KILOGRAMS WITH 500 GRAM LIMIT PLACED ON ROLLS AND BAKED GOODS. (SIGNS NOTED LIMITS AUTHORIZED UNDER RSFSR REGULATIONS

ADOPTED IN 1948 AND MARCH 1972.) SAUSAGE IN EXTREMELY SHORT SUPPLY IN STATE STORES AND WHEN SEEN OF POOR QUALITY WITH NO VARIETY. ONE STATE MEAT STORE VISITED WAS SELLING ONLY PIG HEADS AT 60 KOPECKS PER KILO. (TO SUPPLEMENT ITS SALES, STORE WAS ALSO SELLING CANNED PORRIDGE- CASHA-- AND VEGETABLES.) BUTTER AVAILABLE IN STORES IN VERY LIMITED QUANTITIES, AND ONE RESIDENT SAID THAT IT HAS BEEN RATIONED IN DECEMBER WITH SUBSEQUENT IMPROVEMENT

IN SUPPLY SITUATION. VEGETABLE STORE VISITED HAD QUANTITY OF POOR QUALITY POTATOES AVAILABLE PLUS OLD RADISHES AT 2.20 RUBLES PER KILO AND SPROUTED ONIONS AT 60 KOPECKS IN ADDITION TO SMALL SUPPLY OF BEETS. AT KILKHOZ MARKET SIGNS WERE PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED LIMITING PRICES ON GOODS TO FOLLOWING LEVELS: MEAT - 4 RUBLES PER KILO; POTATOES - 30 KOPECKS PER KILO; CARROTS AND CABBAGE - 80 KOPECKS PER KILO AND EGGS - 1.50 RUBLES FOR TEN. LARGE LINES OBSERVED FOR LIMITED SUPPLY OF BEEF AVAILABLE WITH SOMEWHAT MORE PLENTIFUL QUANTITIES OF POOR QUALITY PORK ALSO OBSERVED. PIG HEADS WERE ON SALE AT STATE STAND.

B. ULYANOVSK: HERE AGAIN, BREAD AVAILABLE IN NORMAL QUANTITIES, ALTHOUGH DARK BREAD MOST PREVALENT. SIGNS IN ALL BREAD STORES DESCRIBED BREAD AS NATIONAL TREASURE AND EXTOLLED CITIZENS NOT TO WASTE IT. MEAT SUPPLIES IN STATE STORES ALSO LIMITED TO PORK WITH ONE STORE OBSERVED SELLING FATTY PORK WITH ONLY MODERATE DEMAND. ONLY TWO TYPES OF POOR QUALITY SAUSAGE OBSERVED. RESIDENT OF ULYANOVSK WITH WHOM EMBOFFS SPOKE SAID BUTTER NOT AVAILABLE IN CITY, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE ALLOTMENT FOR QUARTER HAD RUN OUT. HE SAID BUTTER WOULD BE AVAILABLE AFTER APRIL 1. IN STORES EMBOFFS NOTED MARGARINE AND SOME " CHOCOLATE BUTTER." AT KILKHOZ MARKET ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON SOME BEEF WITH LIMITED DEMAND BEING SOLD AT 4.00 RUBLES PER KILO. POTATOES ON SALE AT TWO STANDS WITH PRICES OF 60 AND 80 KOPECKS PER KILO RESPECTIVELY. SOME CARROTS BEING SOLD AT 1.00 RUBLE PER KILO WHILE NO CABBAGE AVAILABLE. PIG HEADS WERE ALSO BEING SOLD AT 60 KOPECKS PER KILO.

C. UFA: FOOD SITUATION SLIGHTLY BETTER IN UFA, ALTHOUGH ONE RESIDENT, IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS ON TRAIN, SAID " THERE IS PLENTY OF WORK THERE BUT LITTLE FOOD." MAYOR OF CITY TOLD EMBOFFS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT FOOD SITUATION STABLE WITH ONLY BEEF AND MUTTON IN SHORT SUPPLY SINCE IT HAD TO BE MOVED TO MARKET FROM OUTLYING AREAS AND WEATHER CONDITIONS HAD DISRUPTED TRANSPORTATION. HE SAID 18 TYPES OF SAUSAGES READILY AVAILABLE ALTHOUGH EMBOFFS ONLY NOTED TWO IN STATE STORE VISITED. VISITS TO BREAD STORES INDICATED NORMAL SUPPLIES WITH NO SIGNS POSTED INDICATING RESTRICTIONS OR URGING CONSERVATION. AT KOLKHOZ MARKET LARGE QUANTITY OF PIG HEADS AS WELL AS PORK BONES BEING SOLD TO LINE OF CUSTOMERS.

BEEF AVAILABLE IN VERY LIMITED SUPPLY AT 3.50 RUBLES PER KILO WITH MANY CUSTOMERS. CHICKENS BEING SOLD AT 10 RUBLES EACH WHILE LARGE QUANTITY OF EGGS AVAILABLE AT 1.20 PER TEN. ALTHOUGH NO CABBAGE OR CARROTS NOTED, BEETS AND ONIONS AVAILABLE IN STATE STORE AT KILKHOZ MARKET. ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF POTATOES AVAILABLE AT 25-30 KOPECKS PER KILO WHILE ADJACENT STAND BELONGING TO STATE STORE AT 3.70 RUBLES PER KILO.

3. OWING TO WEATHER CONDITIONS, EMBOFFS AUTHORIZED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO TRAVEL VIA TRAIN INSTEAD OF BY AIR FROM ULYANOVSK TO UFA. DURING STATION STOP AT NURLAT (APPROXIMATELY 200 KILOMETERS EAST OF ULYANOVSK), DARK BREAD ONLY AVAILABLE IN STORE VISITED. TWO WOMEN ON TRAIN PLATFORM OVERHEARD TO SAY THAT POTATOES NOT AVAILABLE ALTHOUGH SUPPLY DUE IN ABOUT THREE DAYS. NUMBER OF PEOPLE GATHERED AT TRAIN'S RESTAURANT CAR TO BUY APPLES (AVAILABLE), LEMONS, AND BEER (BOTH NOT AVAILABLE). OFFICERS ALSO SPOKE WITH WORKER EMPLOYED AT SITE OF KAMA RIVER TRUCK COMPLEX WHO SAID BEEF NOT AVAILABLE IN STORES THERE ALTHOUGH PORK AND NUMEROUS TYPES OF SAUSAGE BEING SOLD IN ADEQUATE AMOUNTS. HE STATED THAT BUTTER HAD NOT BEEN AVAILABLE FOR THREE MONTHS. BUT OBSERVED SITUATION HAD IMPROVED ABOUT BEGINNING OF MARCH.

4. IN ALL THREE CITIES VISITED, RESTAURANT MENUS VIRTUALLY DEVOID OF BEEF WITH EXCEPTION OF DISHES LIKE BEEF STROGANOFF. UN ULYANOVKS RUMPSTEAK TURNED OUT TO BE GROUND PORK, AND HOTEL IN UFA HAD " RUMPSTEAK OF HAKE" AVAILABLE AS A HOUSE SPECIALTY.

5. AUTHORITIES SEEM TO HAVE MADE EFFORTS TO MOVE ONTO MARKETS FOODS WHICH AVAILABLE IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES. IN ALL KILKHOZ MARKETS VISITED AS WELL AS AT STAND NEAR NURLAT STATION, LARGE AMOUNTS OF DRIED FRUITS FROM CENTRAL ASIA BEING SOLD WITH RELATIVELY LIGHT DEMANDS. IN KAZAN, KILKHOZ MARKET HAD PLentiful SUPPLIES OF PRESERVED TOMATOES AND PICKLES. IN ALL THREE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CITIES, GOOD SUPPLIES OF FROZEN FISH NOTED IN STATE STORES AND AT STATE STANDS IN KILKHOZ MARKETS. IN DISCUSSION OF FOOD QUESTION, MAYOR OF UFA NOTED THAT CUCUMBERS WERE ALREADY ON SALE IN CITY AND SAID LEMONS WOULD BE SOLD AFTER AGRICULTUREAL QUARANTEE PERIOD COMPLETED. MARGARINE APPEARED READILY AVAILABLE IN ALL THREE CITIES AS SUBSTITUTE FOR BUTTER.

6. INDIVIDUALS WITH WHOM EMBOFFS SPOKE APPEARED TO ACCEPT CURRENT SITUATION IN STRIDE. THEY INDICATED THAT THE WINTER SEASON USUALLY MEANS MORE LIMITED SUPPLIES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS, AND THEY REALIZED THAT DROUGHT LAST YEAR HAD ADDED FURTHER COMPLICATION TO SITUATION. DUBS

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